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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 JUSE-00

SS-15 NSC-05 SY-05 TRSE-00 SP-02 SCA-01 L-02 FBIE-00

PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 /058 W
---------- 129556
R 031524Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7347
DEA WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 1998

CARACAS FOR DEA;

FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: XGDS3- INDEFINITE
TAGS: SNAR CO
SUBJ: DEA AND GOC

REF: STATE 45326

1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL I FIRST NOTE THE FOLLOWING BY WAY OF PUTTING RECENT EVENTS IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE:

A) WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT CLIMATE OF RIVALRIES AMONG GOC AGENCIES AND LACK OF COORDINATION MADE THE RECENT INCIDENT POSSIBLE, IT WAS NOT THIS CLIMATE THAT CAUSED IT. WHAT CAUSED IT WAS OUR INITIATIVE IN GINNING UP A SPECIFIC OPERATION WITH A SPECIFIC AGENCY WHICH WE SELECTED. NO ONE SHOULD LOSE SIGHT OF THAT FACT BECAUSE THAT IS THE PRECISE POINT THAT INCENSED GENERAL MATAL-LANA AND THAT, IN CALMER BUT NONETHELESS SERIOUS TERMS, BOTHERS THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOC. THAT IS THE PROBLEM. OBVIOUSLY THE GOC IS DISTURBED WHEN IT CONTEMPLATES A SITUATION IN WHICH A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT'S NARCOTICS AOPNTS OPERATE MORE OR LESS AT WILL, DETERMINING THEMSELVES WHAT OPERATIONS TO MOUNT AND WITH
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WHOM. AND ALTHOUGH THAT DESCRIPTION MAY SOUND OVERDRAWN, IT

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IS PRECISELY WHAT THE GOC PERCEIVES WHEN IT SEES SUCH THINGS
AS THE SHOOTING FRACAS AND INCIDENTS SUCH AS THOSE DESCRIBED IN
BOGOTA 1414. THAT LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES INVITE THIS KIND OF SITU-
ATION, DOES NOT EXCUSE IT. IN SHORT, THE BASIC SIGNIFICANCE
OF THIS RECENT INCIDENT IS THAT IT ILLUSTRATES THE DANGERS OF
OPERATING IN THIS ENVIRONMENT TOO SINGLEMINDEDLY AND WITH
INSUFFICIENT COORDINATION, AND HOW EASILY WE CAN FALL INTO SUCH
PROBLEMS (WE HAVE BEEN JUST LUCKY UP TO NOW). THIS IN TURN
UNDERLINES THE ESSENTIALITY OF A REASONABLE DISCIPLINING OF
OUR ZEAL, OF SENSITIVITY TO THE ENVIRONMENT WE WORK IN AND THE
COLOMBIAN CONCEPTS OF DIGNITY AND SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE COR-
RESPONDING NEED FOR VERY CAREFUL ORCHESTRATION OF OUR OPERATIONS.

B) THE GOC IN GENERAL AND GENERAL MATALLANA IN PARTICULAR HAVE
BEEN ESPECIALLY SENSITIZED NOW TO US. IT IS PARTICULARLY UN-
FORTUNATE THAT WE CROSSED MATALLANA'S WIRE RATHER THAN SOMEONE
ELSE. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HE HAS THE INSIDE TRACK WITH THE
PRESIDENT AND WE EXPECT THAT HE WILL COME OUT OF THIS WITH
INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY AND JURISDICTION. WE WILL THEREFORE
NOW HAVE TO ENTER A PERIOD OF VERY CAREFUL "CARE AND FEEDING"
TO MOLLIFY HIM, MEET HIS LEGITIMATE CONCERNS AND AVOID FURTHER
ANTAGONISMS.

C) DESPITE THE PROVOCATION, THE GOC GENERALLY AND THE PRESIDENT
PARTICULARLY HAVE ACTED WITH GREAT GOOD WILL AND MODERATION.
THE FACT IS THEY HAD US DEAD TO RIGHTS AND COULD HAVE MADE A REAL
CONFRONTATION OUT OF THE INCIDENT. INSTEAD, THE GOC DELIBERATELY
LEFT OUT THE US PARTICIPATION ASPECT IN ITS PUBLICITY; THE JOINT
COMMUNIQUE WAS A VERY RATIONAL AND RESTRAINED EXPLANATION,
REFERRING TO US ONLY IN PASSING. THE GOC PLACED ITS CONCERN
ABOUT OUR ROLE IN THE PRIVATE AND PROPER CHANNEL OF FOREIGN
MINISTRY TO EMBASSY. THE GOC FURTHERMORE HAS ZEROED IN ON THE
INTERNAL COORDINATION QUESTION AS THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS.
I HOPE THAT ALL ELEMENTS OF THE USG WILL APPRECIATE THE MATURITY
WITH WHICH THE GOC HAS ACTED AND THE OBVIOUS GOOD WILL IT HAS
DEMONSTRATED IN CONSCIOUSLY SEEKING TO AVOID RATMFR THAN CREATE
A PROBLEM WITH US. NOT EVERY GOVERNMENT IN THIS AREA WOULD HAVE ACTED
AS
MODERATELY IN A SIMILAR SITUATION.

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2. IN SUM, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE INCIDENT HAS BASICALLY
AFFECTED THE GOC DETERMINATION TO ATTACK THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM
OR TO WORK WITH US. WHAT IT HAS DONE, AS I INDICATED, IS TO
SENSITIZE AND SORELY DISTURB THEM WITH REGARD TO THE MODALITIES.
THEY HAVE PROPERLY SEEN THE CHALLENGE AS HAVING TWO PROBLEMS: 1)
ORGANIZING THE GOC ITSELF PROPERLY; AND 2) WORKING OUT WITH US
BETTER CONTROLLED CONDITIONS FOR DEA PARTICIPATION. PROPERLY
TOO, THEY ARE MOVING ON THE FORMER FIRST AS A CONDITION PRECEDENT

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FOR DEALING WITH THE LATTER. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT AFTER WHATEVER DECISIONS THEY MAKE AS TO INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND JURISDICTIONS--AFTER THEY HAVE PUT THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER, SO TO SPEAK--THEY WILL TURN TO US. IN THE MEANTIME, AS FAR AS THEY ARE CONCERNED, WE ARE EXPECTED TO BE ON OUR BEST BEHAVIOR.

3. IN THIS REGARD I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT ANY REPEAT OF ANY SIMILAR AFFRONT TO THE GOC'S SENSE OF SOVEREIGNTY WOULD BE TRAGIC. THE PRESIDENT'S PATIENCE IS ALREADY STRAINED. I WOULD IN PARTICULAR ASK THAT DEA WASHINGTON TAKE ESPECIALLY STRONG STEPS TO INSURE THAT ALL RO'S ACT CAREFULLY IN REGARD TO COLOMBIA, AND PARTICULARLY THE MIAMI OFFICE WITH REGARD TO SUCH THINGS AS THOSE DESCRIBED IN BOGOTA 1414. IF WE HAVE A REPEAT INCIDENT, EXPLANATIONS SUCH AS THOSE IN DEA 2358 WILL JUST NOT BE ACCEPTABLE.

4. IN THE LIGHT OF ALL OF THE ABOVE, WE ARE UNDERTAKING THE FOLLOWING:

A) RDO IS SUSPENDING ALL OPERATIONS FOR THE TIME BEING TO LET MATALLANA COOL OFF AND TO PERMIT US TO ASSESS WHAT THE GOC MAY DO BY WAY OF RULESETTING.

B) IF IT APPEARS THAT INTERNAL GOC DECISIONS WILL BE SUBSTANTI-ALLY DELAYED, I INTEND PERSONALLY TO APPROACH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND MATALLANA WITH A VIEW TO WORKING OUT TEMPORARY MODUS OPER-ANDI TO PERMIT US TO RESUME OPERATIONS. WHEN GOC DECISIONS ARE FINALLY MADE WE WILL OF COURSE ADJUST TO THEM.

C) IN MEANTIME WE ARE REVIEWING OUR INTERNAL PROCEDURES AND I WILL WORK OUT WITH BDO VERY CAREFUL INTERNAL CONTROLS TO INSURE THAT EVERY OPERATION IS SCREENED AND ASSESSED FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THESE POLITICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSITIVITIES AND MY PAR-
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TICULAR OVERVIEW.

5. I KNOW THAT ALL ELEMENTS IN RO CARACAS AND WASHINGTON WILL SUPPORT US AS WE WORK OUT THIS SITUATION; AND I AM OPTIMISTIC THAT, HANDLED PROPERLY, WE CAN EMERGE WITH A HEALTHIER AND MORE CONSTRUCTIVE CLIMATE THAN PREVIOUSLY.
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